

REVIEW

# Orchestra's greatness radiates again

By Donald Rosenberg  
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If anyone needs to be convinced once again of the greatness of the Cleveland Orchestra, this week's program of 20th century works should do the trick.

Every inch of the ensemble gets in on the act at some point during this program, which was offered for the first time Thursday night at Severance Hall with music director Christoph von Dohnanyi in charge. Much of the music requires extra troops in the percussion department, which puts in overtime and earns every penny.

The concert was a complete triumph in the evening's newest and oldest pieces, which opened and closed the program, tying the package neatly together.

The newest piece, Charles Wuorinen's splendid *Movers and Shakers*, is about as current as one can get, for here it received its world premiere. Maurice Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe, Suite No. 2*, the night's old friend, has rarely sounded better. Works by Ravel and Messiaen featuring the French pianist Michel Beroff rounded out the program.

The Wuorinen piece, the first commission of Dohnanyi's tenure, is a six-movement, 27-minute work "celebrating the players of the Cleveland Orchestra." The American composer has created an aural feast that focuses on the orchestra's solo, sectional and ensemble virtuosity.

Laid out symmetrically, *Movers and Shakers* is composed of pungent and colorful textures and instrumental lines that are clearly and forcefully deployed. There is never a sense, as in many contemporary works, that notes are being piled up to cover up a lack of ideas.



Charles Wuorinen

Wuorinen's score is a wide palette of expressive and sonoric devices based in an atonal idiom (though it occasionally hovers around tonal centers). Sometimes it screams in nervous fits, sometimes it sings with ethereal beauty.

The music's communicative power lies in its rhythmic vitality, its economy of gesture and its extremes of mood. The ear is always engaged by Wuorinen's alluring, startling shaping of materials and shimmering use of instruments.

Dohnanyi, who is eminently comfortable in works of such complexity, led the Clevelanders in a vivid performance marked by prowess in every department. The trumpets were especially impressive, and the percussion made brave sounds. Wuorinen came onstage to accept the warm response of an audience that doesn't always take kindly to such adventurous fare. The composer looked pleased.

At the opposite end of the program's spectrum was *Daphnis et Chloe, Suite No. 2*, in which Dohnanyi and his musicians seemed to revel in the sensuous and wild Ravellian textures. The perform-

ance was meticulously molded and lavishly executed, offering some of the most gorgeous sounds that have resounded in Severance for a long while.

Dohnanyi milked every drop from the climaxes, and he conveyed the amorous atmospheres in rapturously arching phrases. Jeffrey Khaner's flute solo was luminous. In all, a knockout performance.

There also were wondrous sounds to be heard in Messiaen's *Oiseaux Exotiques*, in which the composer weaves about 40 bird calls. The work, scored for solo piano, winds, brass and percussion, is made of a number of fluttery flights for the piano that flank or merge with whirring, chirping and chattering statements from the other instruments.

In the solo role, Beroff soared about the keyboard with utmost ease and elegance. Dohnanyi and his birds of many colors were always on top of their material.

Beroff's playing in Ravel's *Piano Concerto in G* was no less impressive technically, but it was glacial. The pianist took an unusually sober view of a score that brims with witty and sparkling ideas. Even in the long lyrical lines of the second movement, Beroff phrased with blunt detachment (Felix Kraus' English horn solo was lovely, however).

Dohnanyi set quick tempos in the outer movements that forced his players to race to stay in step. These were the only instances all night when the Clevelanders weren't able to rise to their usual lofty level.

The program will be repeated tonight and Saturday at 8:30. For tickets, call 231-1111.